



# Request for Classification

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Smith Ranch Road  
from Hughes Ranch Road to  
North of Broadway (FM 518)

CSJ No. 0912-31-293

Brazoria County

## Purpose of the Document

The purpose of this document is to request the classification of the proposed project as an Open-Ended (d) Categorical Exclusion (CE). Per Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Environmental Affairs Division (ENV) guidance on choosing a categorical exclusion, “23 CFR § 771.117(d) provides a means to approve categorical exclusions that are not specifically included on the (c)- and (d)-lists. ENV refers to this as an “open-ended (d) CE.” To qualify as an open-ended (d) CE, a project must meet the definition in 40 CFR § 1508.4 as stated below:

*“Categorical exclusion means a category of actions which do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment and which have been found to have no such effect in procedures adopted by a Federal agency in implementation of these regulations (§ 1507.3) and for which, therefore, neither an environmental assessment nor an environmental impact statement is required. An agency may decide in its procedures or otherwise, to prepare environmental assessments for the reasons stated in § 1508.9 even though it is not required to do so. Any procedures under this section shall provide for extraordinary circumstances in which a normally excluded action may have a significant environmental effect.”*

In addition, a project cannot have substantial controversy on environmental grounds (23 CFR § 771.117(b)(2)) and must meet all the criteria listed in 23 CFR § 771.117(a) as stated below:

*“Categorical exclusions (CEs) are actions which meet the definition contained in 40 CFR § 1508.4, and, based on past experience with similar actions, do not involve significant environmental impacts. They are actions which: do not induce significant impacts to planned growth or land use for the area; do not require the relocation of significant numbers of people; do not have a significant impact on any natural, cultural, recreational, historic or other resource; do not involve significant air, noise, or water quality impacts; do not have significant impacts on travel patterns; or do not otherwise, either individually or cumulatively, have any significant environmental impacts.”*

Results of preliminary environmental studies conducted for this project are summarized to demonstrate that the proposed project would meet the definition in 40 CFR § 1508.4, the criteria listed in 23 CFR § 771.117(a), and qualifies as an open-ended (d) CE. Supporting documentation is on file at the TxDOT Houston District.

## Proposed Action

The City of Pearland, in cooperation with TxDOT, proposes to widen Smith Ranch Road from Hughes Ranch Road to north of FM 518 (Broadway Street). Smith Ranch Road within the project limits consists of a two-lane, undivided asphalt roadway with one 10-foot-wide travel lane in each direction, no shoulders, and shallow, open vegetated ditches or swales. Approximately 1,050 linear feet of discontinuous 5-foot-wide sidewalk exists on the west side at the northern end of the project. The total project length is approximately 0.76 mile. The project primarily involves expanding the existing two-lane roadway to a four-lane boulevard, matching the existing Smith Ranch Boulevard segment south of the proposed project’s southern terminus. The proposed roadway would have four new, concrete-paved, curbed 12-foot-wide travel lanes, a variable-width raised median with left turn bays, and a 10-foot-wide shared use path on the west side.

Portions of four parcels on the west side and 13 parcels on the east side of the road would need to be acquired. Work would also include modifications to the reinforced concrete box (RCB) in Argovitz Pond, which would occur in an approximately 0.43-acre construction easement. Approximately four acres of additional ROW would be required for this project. The existing ROW width within the project limits is approximately 40 to 70 feet wide. This acquisition would not result in the displacement of any commercial structures or residences. Preliminary ROW maps can be found in the ECOS file of record.

Refer to the attached **Project Vicinity Map** and **Project Location Map** for an illustration of project limits, and to the **Typical Sections** for detailed views of the proposed design.

The proposed project could not be classified as a c22 CE (projects taking place all within existing, mowed, and maintained ROW), due to the requirement of additional ROW.

## **Purpose and Need**

The need for the project, as presented in the February 21, 2017 public meeting, is supported by the following existing roadway conditions:

- The roadway capacity is inadequate for projected traffic growth.
- This section of Smith Ranch Road presents a bottleneck area, as it is two-lane from Hughes Ranch Road to approximately 0.39 mile north of FM 518, where it expands to a four-lane boulevard section.
- The roadway has inadequate pedestrian and bicycle safety accommodations.
- The narrow lanes and lack of shoulders within this section of Smith Ranch Road do not provide adequate safety.

The purpose of the proposed project is to accommodate projected growth, improve mobility with a consistent number of roadway lanes, provide pedestrian and bicyclist accommodations, and enhance the safety of the roadway.

## **Justification of Categorical Exclusion Classification (Criteria 23 CFR 771.117(a))**

Per TxDOT's guidance on choosing a categorical exclusion, projects meeting the criteria in 23 CFR 771.117(a) also meet CEQ criteria for a CE in 40 CFR § 1508.4. In addition, the guidance includes that the project cannot have substantial controversy on environmental grounds as stated in 23 CFR 771.117(b)(2). The following subsections demonstrate how the proposed project meets each criterion from 23 CFR § 771.117(a) explicitly and individually and meets 23 CFR § 771.117(b)(2).

### **Do not induce significant impacts to planned growth or land use for the area.**

Smith Ranch Road is an existing facility within the City of Pearland, and traffic patterns in the area would continue to follow the existing alignment. There would be a minor change in access, since the project includes the addition of raised medians. The project would not create a new bypass or relief route; change the way people currently get to communities, businesses, or homes; and would not result in an increase in emergency response time.

The proposed project would not bisect any neighborhoods or communities. The project is adjoined by primarily small-acreage agricultural and commercial properties on the east and west sides within the project limits.

The proposed project would not substantially increase access or mobility along the project area, as there is already a two-lane roadway in this location. While there are several vacant tracts available for development along the corridor, the proposed project is not anticipated to induce significant impacts to land use in the project area. Development of this area is anticipated to occur regardless of the project (although development may happen sooner with implementation of the project). The City of Pearland has concurred with this assessment. A design schematic is in the ECOS file of record.

### **Do not require the relocation of significant numbers of people.**

The City of Pearland would acquire ROW needed for this project in accordance with FHWA guidelines. No structures are located within the four acres from which proposed ROW would be acquired. The project would not result in displacements. Preliminary ROW maps can be found in the ECOS file of record.

### **Do not have significant impacts on any natural resources.**

The existing ROW has been mowed and maintained as “operational” ROW. Additional proposed ROW does not appear to be suitable habitat for any threatened or endangered species. A Biological Evaluation Form and Tier I Assessment form were completed for the proposed project. Based on the findings, coordination with Texas Parks and Wildlife was not required. TxDOT approval for the Biological Evaluation and Tier I Assessment were both issued by January 2018.

### **Do not have significant impacts on any cultural resources.**

TxDOT ENV HIST completed review of the research design and noted the proposed project does not require an historic resources reconnaissance survey (HRSR). HIST has been cleared as of December 2017.

An archaeological background study has been completed; no additional surveys are recommended. No impacts to archaeological resources are anticipated. PALM and topographic maps can be found in ECOS project file. TxDOT approval of the Archaeology Background Study was received in February 2018.

### **Do not have significant impacts on any recreational resources.**

No parks or recreational areas are present within the existing or proposed ROW; therefore, no impacts are anticipated.

### **Do not have significant air or noise impacts.**

The proposed project would add capacity; therefore, an air quality study was required. The project is in an Ozone non-attainment area; therefore, a Congestion Management Process analysis and a Mobile Source Air Toxics (MSATs) analysis were performed. Since projected (2039) average annual daily traffic volumes are well below 140,000 vehicles per day, a qualitative MSAT analysis was performed. A Traffic Air Quality Analysis for carbon monoxide was not required. There would not be a significant or uncertain impact to air quality as a result of the proposed project. TxDOT approval of the Air Quality Technical Report and FHWA approval of the AQ Conformity Determination Form were received in November and October 2017, respectively.

The proposed project would alter the horizontal alignment of the existing roadway; therefore, a traffic noise analysis and study were required. The noise analysis indicated the proposed project would not result in a traffic noise impact. TxDOT approval of the Traffic Noise Technical Report was received in January 2018.

### **Do not have significant water quality impacts.**

Significant water quality impacts are not anticipated. The project will comply with the construction general permit. A storm water prevention pollution plan (SW3P) will be implemented. A construction site notice will be posted and notice of intent (NOI) will be filed with Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). The project is not located within a 100-year floodplain; therefore, coordination with the local floodplain administrator would not be required. A U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) permit is not required.

The proposed project will have minimal impact (~0.06 acre) on two Waters of the U.S.: 170 LF of Hickory Slough and ~ 20 LF of a stream exiting Argovitz Pond. The proposed project's impacts on Waters of the U.S. meet the criteria for a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Nationwide Permit (NWP) 14 (Linear Transportation Crossings). No Pre-Construction Notification (PCN) would be required, since impacts would be less than 0.1 acre and no special aquatic sites (i.e., wetlands) would be impacted.

### **Do not individually or cumulatively have any significant environmental impacts.**

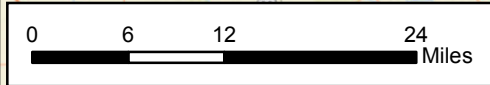
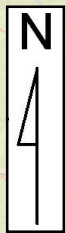
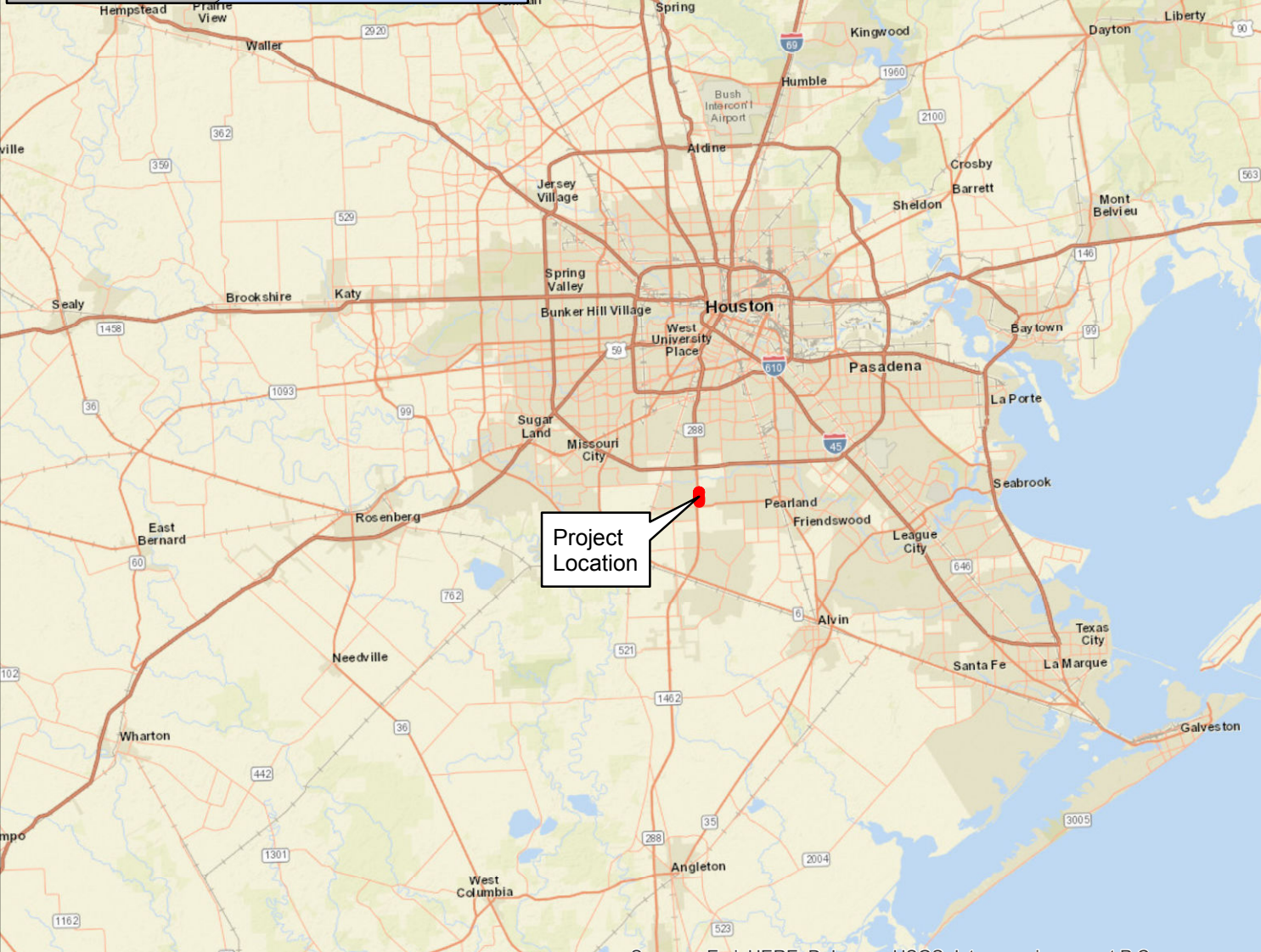
The proposed Smith Ranch Road project would be constructed mostly within the existing, mowed and maintained ROW of Smith Ranch Road, with up to approximately 4 acres of additional proposed ROW required. No significant impacts to hazardous materials, cultural resources, biological resources, water resources, or the human environment are anticipated as a result of this project. Because there is no known development to occur as a result of this project (per the City of Pearland), the proposed project is not anticipated to result in notable induced impacts. If further studies indicate a significant or uncertain impact, to any hazardous materials, cultural resources, biological resources, water resources, or the Human Environment, the project would then be reclassified. As described above, the proposed project would not have substantial direct or indirect impacts on any resource. Additionally, there are no resources in the project area in poor or declining health. The enhanced mobility anticipated as a result of this project is not expected to be cumulatively significant when considered with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions within the greater project area.

## **Do not have substantial controversy on environmental grounds.**

A public meeting was held in February 2017. There was no controversy on environmental grounds during that meeting. After environmental approval, a Notice Affording Opportunity for Public Hearing will be issued. If public response warrants a public hearing, then a hearing would be scheduled.

## **Summary of Categorical Exclusion Classification.**

As demonstrated above, the proposed project would meet all the criteria listed in 23 CFR §771.117(a) and the definition of a CE in 40 CFR § 1508.4. The proposed project does not induce significant impacts to planned growth or land use for the area; does not require relocations; does not have a significant impact on any natural, cultural, recreational, historic or other resource; does not involve significant air, noise, or water quality impacts; does not have significant impacts on travel patterns; nor does the project, either individually or cumulatively, have any significant environmental impacts. In addition, there is no substantial controversy on environmental grounds associated with the proposed project. For these reasons, it is requested that the proposed project be classified as an "open-ended (d) CE". If you have any questions, please contact Sabrina Stachowski at (713) 802-5256.



Sources: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, USGS, Intermap, increment P Corp., NRCAN, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri (Thailand), TomTom, MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

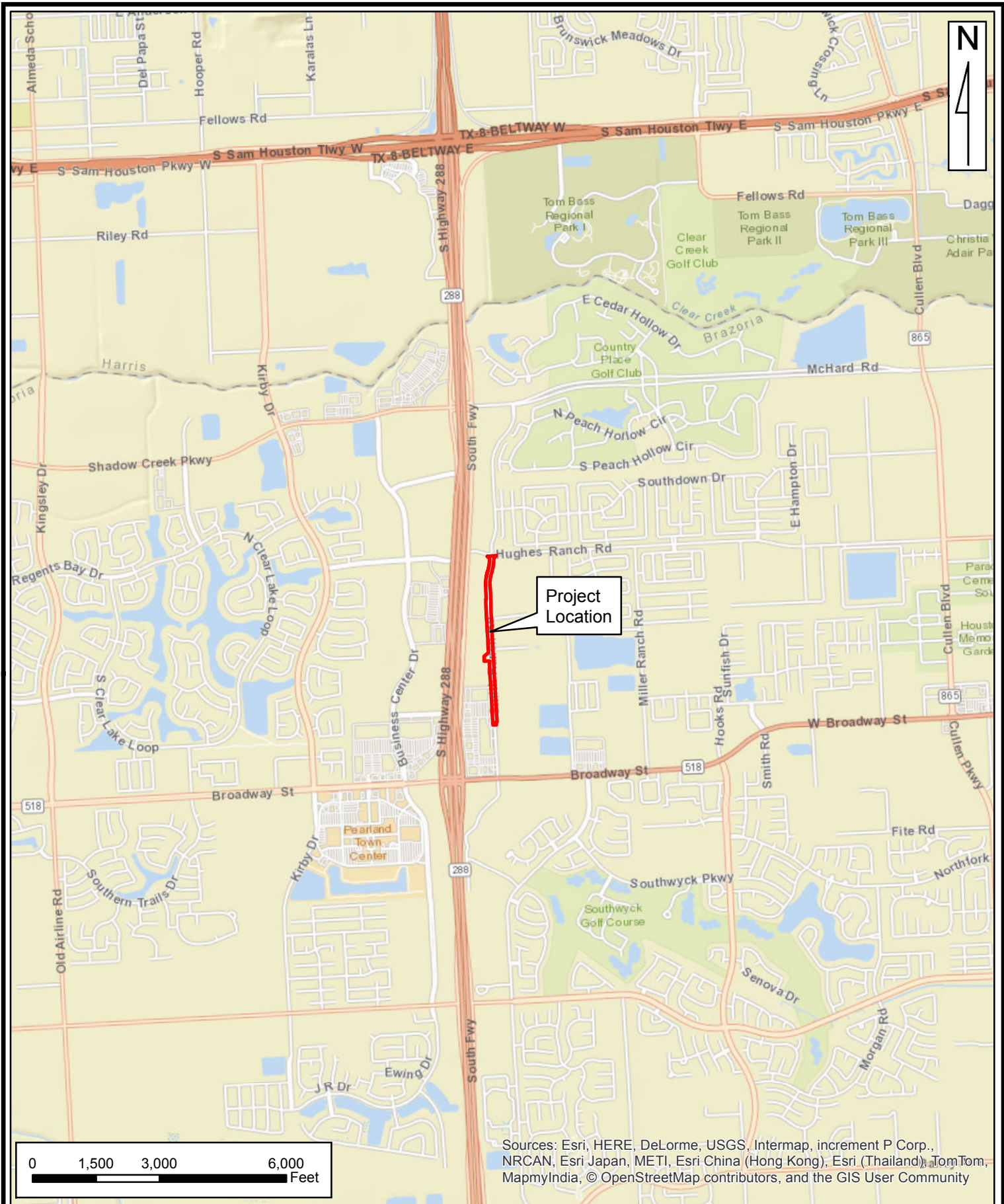
**PROJECT VICINITY MAP**

Project #: 9790 - CSJ: 0912-31-293  
 For: City of Pearland  
 Location: Smith Ranch Rd.  
 Brazoria County, Texas

REVISIONS
Sep. 12, 2017 by MDB

**BERG•OLIVER ASSOCIATES, INC.**  
 ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE & LAND USE CONSULTANTS  
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 HOUSTON, TEXAS 77079 PHONE (281)589-0898 <http://www.bergoliver.com>





Sources: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, USGS, Intermap, increment P Corp., NRCAN, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri (Thailand), TomTom, MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

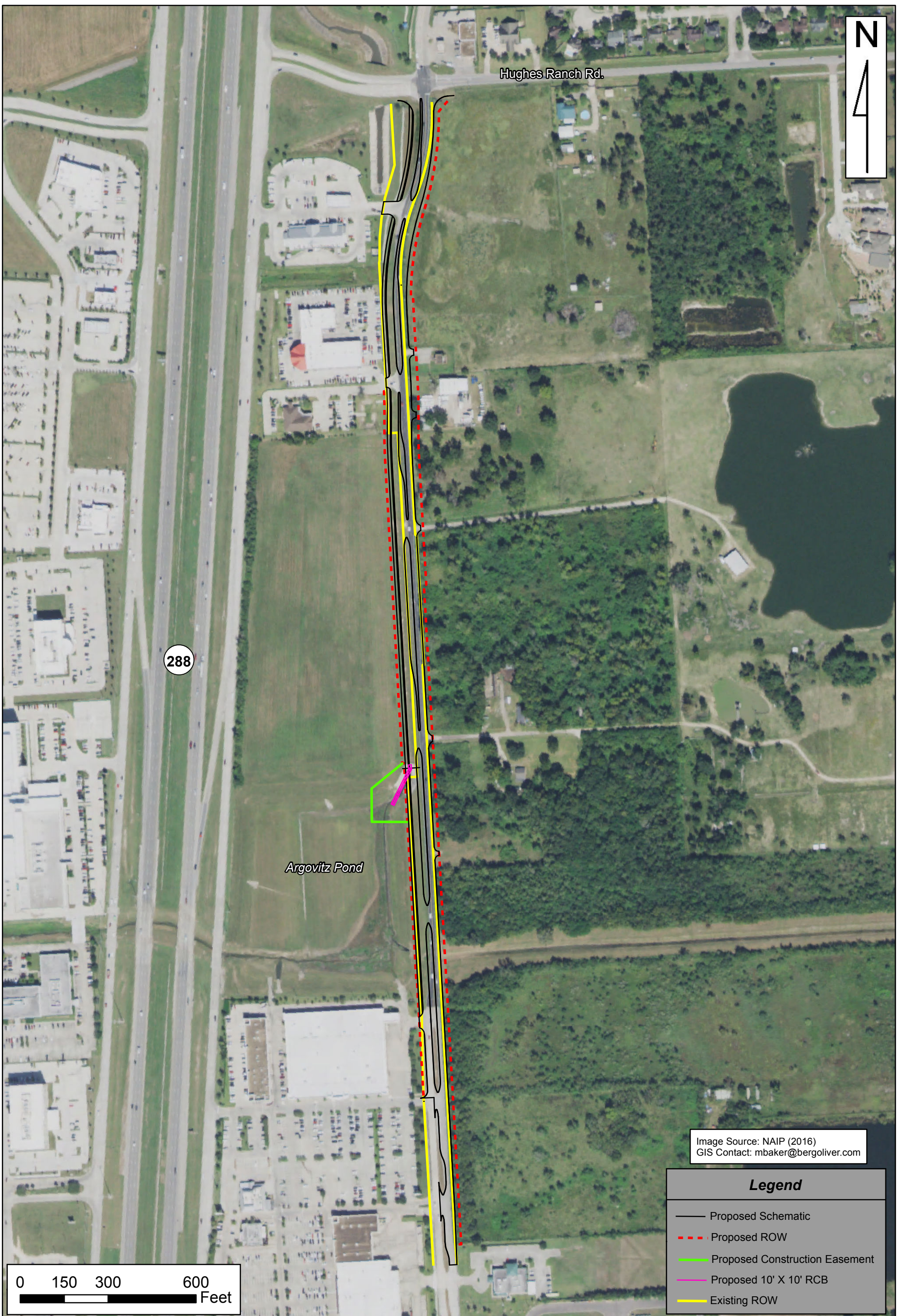
**PROJECT LOCATION MAP**

Project #: 9790 - CSJ: 0912-31-293  
 For: City of Pearland  
 Location: Smith Ranch Rd.  
 Brazoria County, Texas

REVISIONS
Sep. 12, 2017 by MDB

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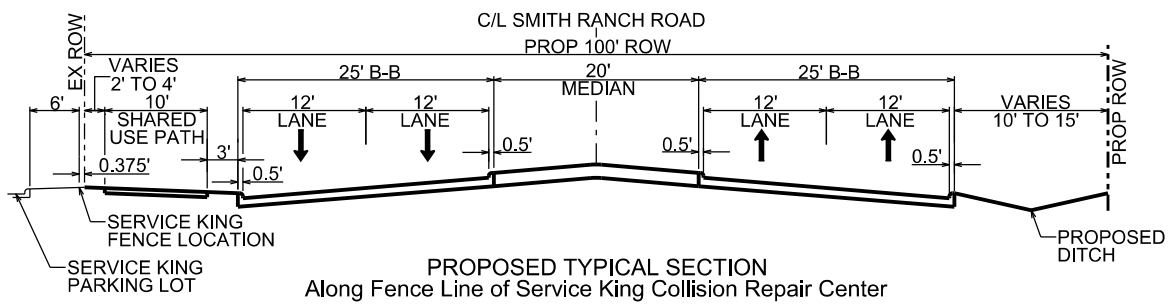
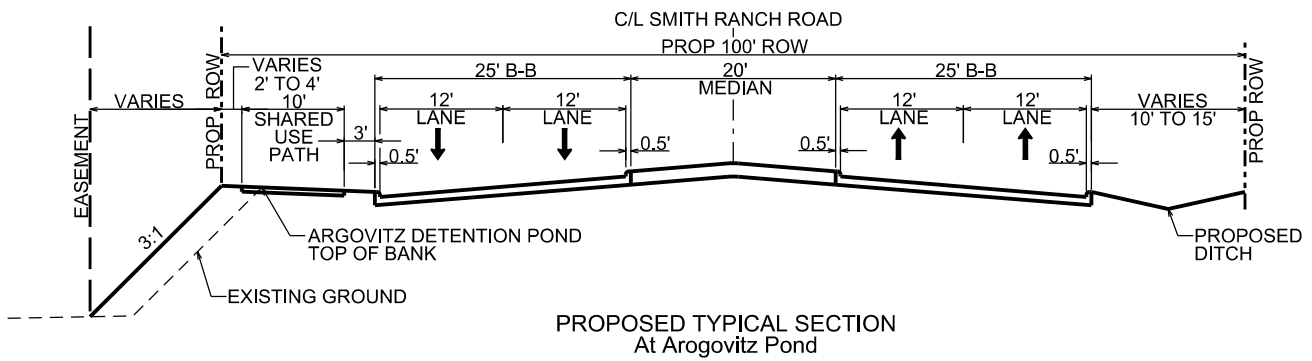
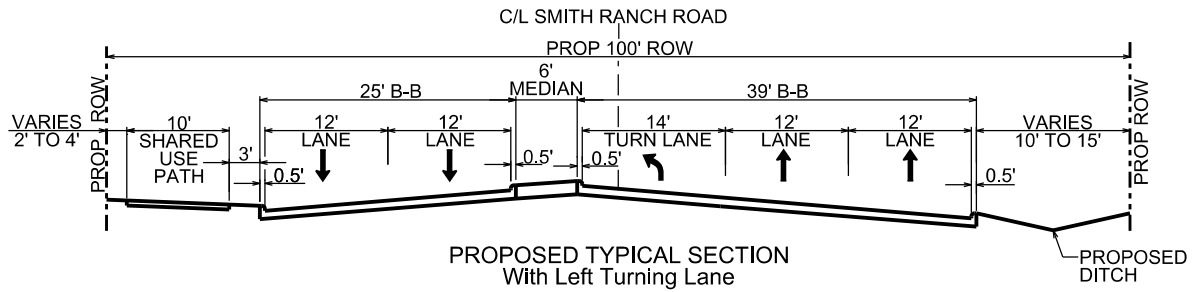
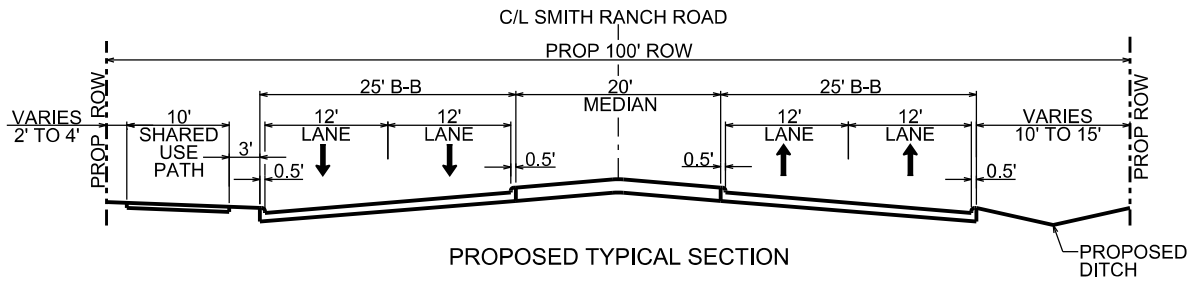
**PROJECT LAYOUT MAP**

Project #: 9790 - CSJ: 0912-31-293  
 For: City of Pearland  
 Location: Smith Ranch Rd.  
 Brazoria County, Texas

REVISIONS
Sep. 11, 2017 by MDB

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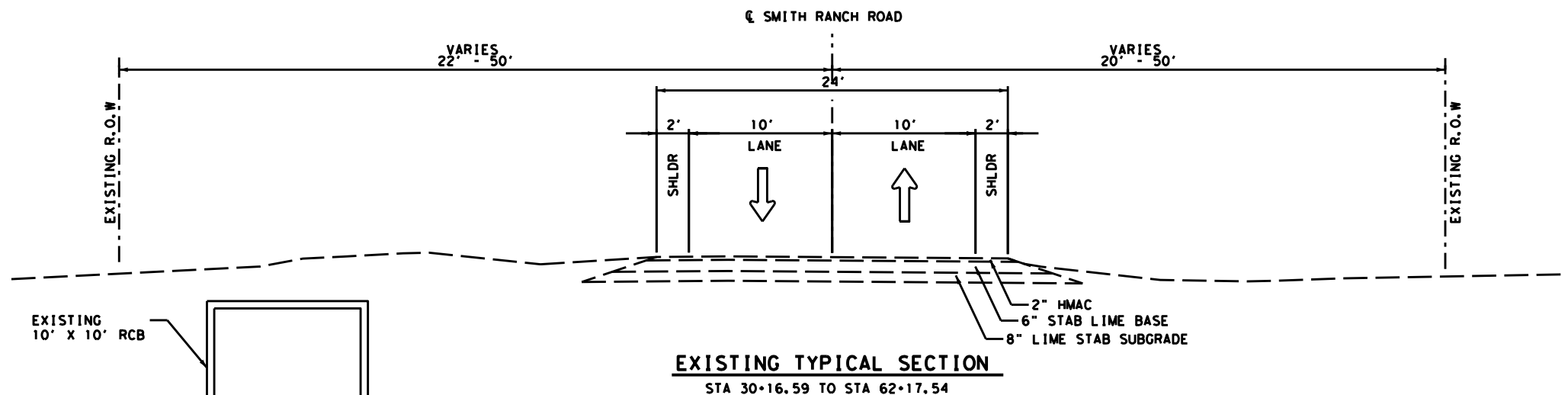
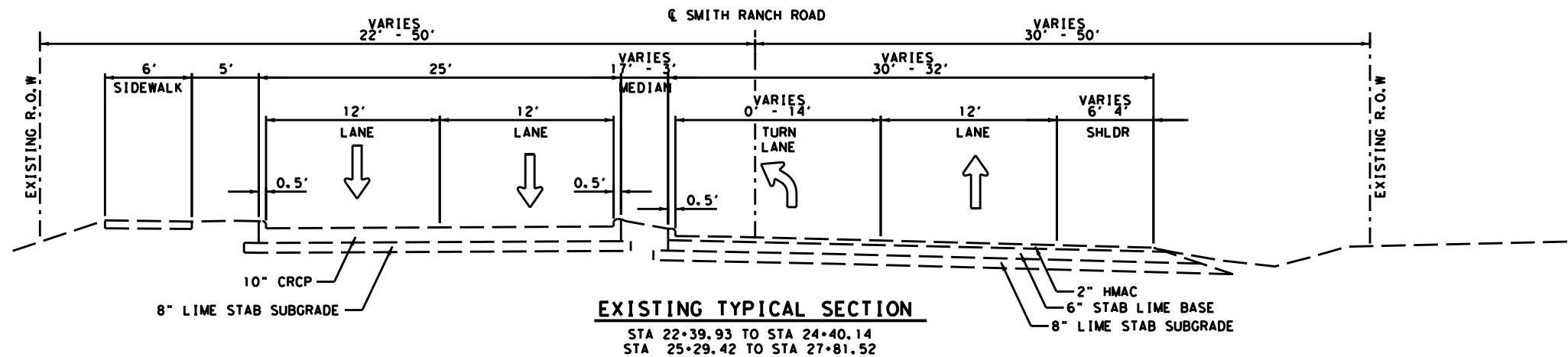
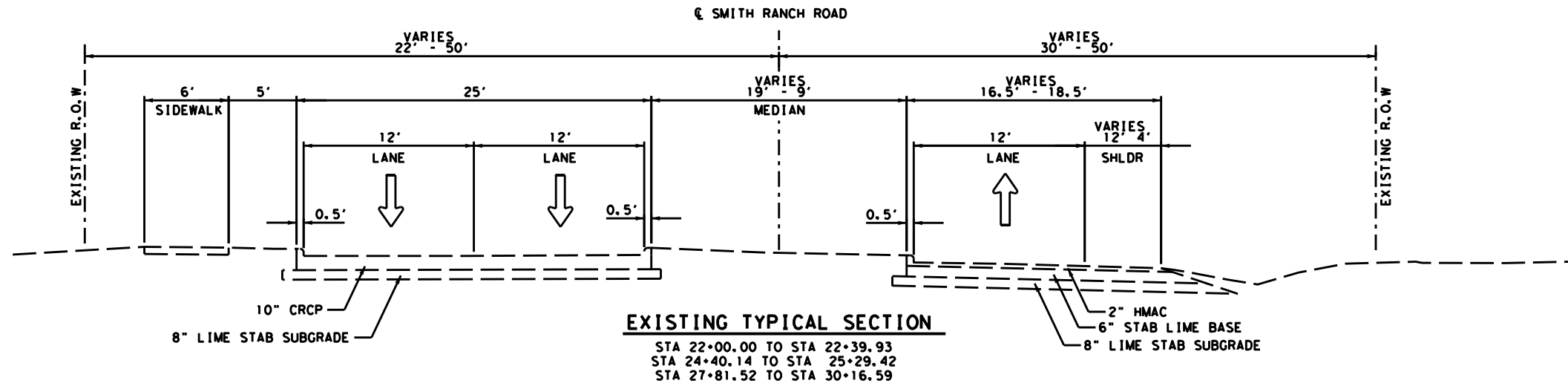


NOT TO SCALE

**TYPICAL SECTIONS**

Project #: 9790 - CSJ; 0912-31-293  
 For: TxDOT  
 Location: Smith Ranch Rd from Hughes Ranch Rd to Broadway St (FM 518)  
 Brazoria County, Texas

REVISIONS
7/28/17 by MER



NOT TO SCALE

**30% SUBMITTAL**

THIS DOCUMENT IS RELEASED FOR THE PURPOSE OF INTERIM REVIEW UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF ELIZABETH X. JOHNSON, P.E. XXXXXX. IT IS NOT TO BE USED FOR CONSTRUCTION, BIDDING, OR PERMIT PURPOSES. DATE: \$DATE\$

REV. NO.	DATE	DESCRIPTION	BY

**DANNENBAUM**  
 ENGINEERING COMPANY - HOUSTON, LLC  
 T.B.P.E. FIRM REGISTRATION #8998  
 3100 WEST ALABAMA, HOUSTON, TEXAS 77098 (713) 520-9570



**SMITH RANCH ROAD  
 TYPICAL SECTIONS**

DSN#	FED. RD. DIV. NO.	STATE	FEDEBAL AID PROJECT NO.	HIGHWAY NO.		
CK1	6	TEXAS		SRR		
DRN#	STATE DISTRICT	COUNTY	CONTROL NO.	SECTION NO.	JOB NO.	SHEET NO.
CK1	HOU	BRAZORIA	XXXX	XX	XXX	SP3

USER: \$USERS\$  
 \$TIMES\$  
 \$DATES\$  
 \$FILES\$